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REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONCLUDING DOCUMENT OF THE TWELFTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY: REGIONAL CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES: ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SECURITY QUESTIONS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 14 August 1998 from the Permanent Mission of Gabon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the final reports of the ministerial meetings of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held from 28 to 30 April 1998 in Libreville and from 18 to 21 May 1998 in Bata, Equatorial Guinea, respectively.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annexes distributed as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Denis DANGUE RÉWAKA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex I

Final report of the Meeting of Ministers of Defence and of the Interior of the Countries Members of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in Libreville from 28 to 30 April 1998

Introduction

1. The Meeting of Ministers of Defence and of the Interior of the Countries Members of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, the first of its kind, was held in Libreville from 28 to 30 April 1998.

2. Delegations from the following countries took part in the meeting: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and São Tome and Principe. The delegation of Rwanda was unable to attend. The delegation of Chad did not attend the meeting but transmitted written proposals to the Bureau, which took note of them.

3. The solemn opening ceremony of the meeting included welcoming remarks by General Idriss Ngari, Minister of Defence of Gabon, and an opening statement by His Excellency Mr. Casimir Oye Mba, President of the Committee's Bureau and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Gabon, speaking on behalf of the Government of the host country.

4. Work of the meeting

The meeting began its work by adopting the following agenda:

- Exchange of views on subregional cooperation in defence and security matters;

- Proposal for the establishment of a Supreme Council for the Promotion of Peace and the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Armed Conflict in Central Africa;

- Consideration of the proposal for joint military simulation exercises for peacekeeping operations;

- Consideration of the proposal for a training-of-trainers seminar on peace-building through practical disarmament measures;

- Consideration of the proposal for a programme to combat the illicit traffic in arms and drugs in the Central African subregion;

- Preliminary exchange of views on the report of the Secretary-General entitled "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa";

- Evaluation of progress towards the establishment of an early warning mechanism as a means of preventing crises and conflicts in Central Africa.

A. Exchange of views on subregional cooperation in defence and security matters

5. This question gave rise to a wide-ranging discussion, during which the Ministers stressed the need to strengthen cooperation in defence and security matters in the subregion. The exchange of views allowed each delegation to present the position of its Government.

Angola

6. The Angolan delegation pledged to sign the Non-Aggression Pact among member States at the next Conference of Heads of State and Government.

7. The delegation referred to Angola's domestic political situation and condemned the failure of the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) to abide by the Lusaka Protocol in its entirety. The Committee welcomed the efforts made by the Angolan Government to promote a peaceful settlement.

Burundi

8. The delegation of Burundi once again thanked the countries members of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa for their constant, highly effective support for Burundi in its struggle against the economic blockade unjustly imposed by neighbouring countries, and asked them to continue their support.

9. It also welcomed the reiteration by the countries members of the Committee of their unwavering support for the immediate lifting of the economic and political blockade which was stifling the people of Burundi and preventing them from making progress in their search for a lasting peace.

Cameroon

10. The delegation of Cameroon informed the Committee of recent developments in the crisis between Cameroon and Nigeria concerning the Bakassi peninsula and other points along the border.

11. In that regard, it informed the Committee of Nigeria's failure to respect the boundaries inherited from the colonial period, an attitude which threatened the stability of the subregion.

12. Since Cameroon was awaiting the verdict of the International Court of Justice, which had just met to consider the preliminary objections raised by Nigeria, the Committee expressed the hope that the parties would abide by the Court's decisions.

13. Lastly, the delegation of Cameroon raised the problem of "roadblockers", which posed a threat to the security of member States. In response, the

Committee called for prompt collective action to be taken to eliminate that problem.

Congo

14. The delegation of the Congo reminded the Committee of the tragedy recently experienced by its country and reported on the efforts make to rebuild the country and achieve national reconciliation.

15. It stressed the need for States of the subregion to refrain from serving as bases for the destabilization of neighbouring States.

16. It also suggested that more frequent contacts should be established among the security services of countries members of the Committee in order to promote mutual confidence.

Central African Republic

17. The delegation of the Central African Republic recalled the reasons for the crisis experienced by its country, the magnitude of which had prompted the Franco-African meeting of Heads of State in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) to adopt a decision on ways to find a solution.

18. It paid tribute to the contribution made by the mediators of the crisis, under the leadership of His Excellency Mr. El Hadj Omar Bongo, President of the Gabonese Republic and Chairman of the International Monitoring Committee to supervise the implementation of the Bangui Agreements, to a comprehensive settlement of that crisis.

19. It recognized, however, that, despite the improvement noted on the ground and the replacement of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) by the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA), the situation remained precarious, particularly in remote areas, owing to the proliferation of arms which was giving rise to a new disturbing situation, that of armed gangs of "roadblockers".

20. The delegation also informed the Committee of the joint military manoeuvres conducted by Chad and the Central African Republic. Its country hoped to conduct similar manoeuvres with the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

21. The delegation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, which it saw as forming part of peace-building efforts in the subregion.

22. It condemned the methods of the former Government, which had prompted the military action taken by the Alliance des Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre (AFDL), and informed the Committee of the efforts make by the Government of National Salvation to rebuild the country.

23. It denounced the banning of the activities of political parties which had over 400 militias and expressed indignation at the negative propaganda orchestrated by certain members of the international community in an attempt to deter investors.

24. Referring to the situation in the Kivu region, it noted that the massive influx of foreign armed gangs was creating a situation of insecurity and requested United Nations assistance in disarming those gangs and returning them to their countries of origin.

São Tome and Principe

25. The delegation of São Tome and Principe informed the Committee of its country's efforts to consolidate democratic gains.

26. It expressed the view that subregional cooperation in defence and security matters was the key to stability and peace in the subregion.

27. It reiterated its country's wish to see the Committee establish a peacekeeping unit in the subregion.

B. Proposal for the establishment of a Supreme Council for the Promotion of Peace and Prevention, Management and Resolution of Armed Conflict in Central Africa

28. The Ministers considered a proposal for the establishment of a Supreme Council for the Promotion of Peace and Prevention, Management and Resolution of Armed Conflict in Central Africa, which is appended to this report.

29. They unanimously adopted the proposal, which will be submitted to the Heads of State and Government of the countries members of the Committee for approval at their next summit meeting.

C. Consideration of the proposal for joint military simulation exercises for peacekeeping operations

30. In accordance with the recommendation of the Committee's ninth ministerial meeting, the delegation of Gabon, which presides over the Bureau of the Committee, presented a proposal for joint military simulation exercises for peacekeeping operations. The Ministers approved the implementation of this proposal.

31. To that end, a meeting of Chiefs of Staff will be held in Libreville, Gabon, on 14 and 15 May 1998 to discuss the practical modalities and the evaluation of the conduct of the exercises.

32. That meeting will consider and refine the proposal presented by Gabon. The Ministers instructed the Committee's Bureau to submit the final proposal to the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and to any other contributor with a view to securing the funding needed to hold the exercises.

D. Consideration of the proposal for a training-of-trainers seminar on peace-building through practical disarmament measures

33. The Ministers stressed the need to provide all members of the Committee with the expertise essential for conducting genuine programmes for the promotion of peace and peace-building through practical disarmament measures.

34. They recognized that such a seminar would help to build the capacity of countries in the subregion to implement their disarmament and peace-building programmes.

35. They thanked those countries which had made voluntary contributions towards funding the seminar and asked the Committee secretariat to ensure its effectiveness.

E. Consideration of the proposal for a programme to combat the illicit traffic in arms and drugs in the Central African subregion

36. The Ministers discussed this item at length and stressed the urgent need to take effective action to help eliminate the scourge of uncontrolled arms proliferation and the related traffic in drugs.

37. They recognized that only through genuine cooperation at the subregional level could that twofold problem be effectively combated.

38. They also acknowledged that assistance from the international community would help to intensify the efforts of countries in the subregion to combat the illicit traffic in arms.

39. In that regard, the Ministers welcomed the recommendations of the Secretary-General of the United Nations contained in paragraphs 27 and 28 of his report entitled "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa".

40. In addition to the measures proposed by the Secretary-General, the Ministers suggested the following:

(a) Creation of a police technical operations group which would promote cooperation among the various police forces, in order to combat crime and the illicit traffic in arms and drugs in the Central African subregion.

(b) This group would basically comprise the following agencies:

- police;
- customs;
- immigration and border authorities;
- special services.

(c) Drafting at the subregional level of legal instruments on the monitoring of the arms movements.

(d) Increased vigilance over cross-border transit and transport activities, in particular tankers, containers and carriers used to ship arms and drugs.

(e) Joint search operations to recover arms in border areas.

(f) Strict control over the arsenals of security firms.

(g) Prohibition of private militias or militias belonging to political parties.

(h) Identification and reporting of arms traffickers.

(i) Consideration of the possibility of making countries which harbour such traffickers liable for their activities.

(j) Accession of States members of the Committee to the agreement on criminal police cooperation in the subregion, initiated by Interpol at the meeting of police and security chiefs held in Brazzaville in 1997.

(k) The Ministers expressed the hope that close cooperation would be established with countries through which commercial goods are shipped in transit, for instance by means of systematic searches of containers. They also asked the United Nations to organize a campaign to increase awareness of efforts to combat the uncontrolled traffic in arms, along the lines of the campaigns waged against chemical weapons and anti-personnel mines.

(l) Strengthening of structures for combating the illicit traffic in narcotic drugs at the national and subregional levels.

(m) Installation and/or improvement of appropriate equipment for the monitoring and detection of prohibited substances, along land, air and sea borders.

(n) Strengthening of cooperation and coordination between States and the relevant international organizations of which they are members, such as Interpol and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP).

(o) Ratification of United Nations conventions on narcotic drugs by States which have not yet done so.

(p) Confiscation and destruction of weapons currently in the possession of demobilized soldiers in the countries of the subregion.

(q) Accession by CEEAC member States to and their strict implementation of the conventions on arms limitation and the banning of landmines.

(r) Participation by member States of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), in April of each year, in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

(s) Prohibition of the sale of arms and ammunition in countries of the subregion during certain periods.

(t) Education and training of skilled personnel and installation of adequate equipment for detection, identification and destruction.

(u) Development of subregional cooperation in the areas of demining and assistance to mine victims in order to make full use of the expertise available within ECCAS and to build local capacities in those two areas.

(v) Increasing the international community's awareness of the suffering endured by member States as a result of arms and anti-personnel mines, and creating conditions favourable to the mobilization of funding for demining and assistance to victims.

(w) Development of a strategic plan of action in response to the problems posed by arms and landmines, and effective use of resources.

(x) Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

(y) Return of arms and gear by demobilized soldiers prior to their reintegration into civilian life.

(z) Close, regular monitoring of weapons in the possession of soldiers on active duty.

(aa) Assistance by the international community and friendly countries in disarming populations.

(bb) Implementation of effective measures for the prevention of crises and conflicts in the subregion.

(cc) Strengthening of cooperation in combating the illicit traffic in arms.

(dd) Observance of the principle that armed groups must not be permitted to establish sanctuaries in neighbouring States.

41. In view of the many dangers to which the uncontrolled circulation of arms exposes countries of the subregion, the Ministers agreed that the above measures and actions should be brought to the attention of the Secretary-General of the United Nations with a view to their fuller consideration by the Security Council in accordance with the recommendation made in paragraph 28 of the report of the Secretary-General.

F. Preliminary exchange of views on the report of the Secretary-General entitled "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa" (paras. 27 and 28)

42. The Ministers welcomed the Secretary-General's proposals for stopping the proliferation of arms.

43. They recognized unanimously that only a genuine climate of trust among their respective States could promote the adoption of policies for reducing military expenditures.

44. They also expressed support for the Secretary-General's appeal to arms-exporting countries to refrain from transferring weapons to zones of conflict or tension. They also expressed support for the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Security Council should publicly identify arms merchants.

G. Evaluation of progress towards the establishment of an early warning mechanism as a means of preventing crises and conflicts in Central Africa

45. The Ministers reiterated the need to establish an early warning mechanism in Central Africa as soon as possible, in accordance with the decision taken by the Heads of State and Government of the subregion.

46. In order to ensure the effective participation of all member States, the Ministers stressed the importance of developing and harmonizing the communications capacities of all member States, the aim being to increase each State's ability to collect locally, to transmit and to receive information emanating from the mechanism. Those measures should also ensure better communication among member States.

47. In view of the sensitive nature of the information with which the mechanism would have to deal, the Ministers expressed the hope that utmost confidentiality would be observed in disseminating such information. To that end, priority would be given to member States and, above all, to the subregional political organ for conflict prevention and management, whose creation they had recommended to their Heads of State.

H. Other matters

48. In order to facilitate the full participation of all member States in the work of the Committee, the Ministers expressed the hope that French, English, Portuguese and Spanish would henceforth be used as working languages.

Solemn closing ceremony

49. The closing ceremony included the adoption of the final report, an address by General Idriss Ngari, Minister of Defence of Gabon, and a closing statement by His Excellency Mr. Paulin Obame Nguema, Prime Minister and Head of Government.

Done at Libreville on 30 April 1998

Appendix

Proposal for the establishment of a Supreme Council for the Promotion of Peace and the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Armed Conflict in Central Africa

Preamble: The Heads of State and Government of the countries members of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), meeting from ... to ... 1998, wishing to strengthen and safeguard peace and security in the region of Central Africa, desiring to create a climate favourable to the harmonious economic and social development of their countries and their peoples, resolved to comply with the relevant provisions of the Non-Aggression Pact and convinced of the need to strengthen subregional cooperation and economic integration, have agreed to provide the Community with a Supreme Council for the Promotion of Peace and the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Armed Conflict in Central Africa, hereinafter referred to as "the Supreme Council", based on the following principles and with the following objectives:

1. Principles:

The Supreme Council's actions shall be guided by the following principles, set forth in the Charters of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU):

(a) The sovereign equality of all States;

(b) Non-interference in the internal affairs of States;

(c) Peaceful settlement of disputes;

(d) The inviolability of internationally recognized borders;

(e) Cooperation and solidarity for subregional economic integration and progress;

(f) Partnership for subregional peace and security;

(g) Protection of human rights;

(h) Attachment to democratic values;

(i) Respect for the rule of law.

2. Objectives:

The objectives of the Supreme Council shall be to:

(a) Work to strengthen subregional peace and security;

(b) Reduce hotbeds of tension and prevent the outbreak of armed conflict;

(c) Develop confidence-building measures among the member countries;

(d) Promote policies for the peaceful settlement of disputes;

(e) Increase subregional cooperation in defence and security matters;

(f) Support the establishment of participatory systems of government and ensure the practice of good governance;

(g) Facilitate efforts to mediate crises and conflicts within and among States of the subregion or with third States;

(h) Establish guiding principles for peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building at the subregional level;

(i) Organize and coordinate the participation of member countries in peace operations undertaken on their own initiative or on that of the United Nations or OAU;

(j) Harmonize member countries' efforts to combat the uncontrolled proliferation of and illicit traffic in arms and drugs;

(k) Promote the adoption of effective measures to ensure the free movement of goods and persons;

(l) Coordinate the action taken by member countries to combat the phenomenon of illegal immigration; and

(m) Ensure a coordinated response to the refugee problem, in keeping with the international instruments in force.

3. Organization and functioning:

In view of the persistence of situations of crisis and conflict in the Central African subregion, the Supreme Council shall be the main political organ of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) responsible for defining and conducting the political action of the member countries in the area of peace and security. As such, it shall be answerable directly to the Heads of State and Government of the Community. The Supreme Council shall be headed by the country occupying the Presidency of the Community. It shall meet at the level of Heads of State and Government.

The Supreme Council shall be assisted in its work by a Council of Ministers, which, assisted by experts, shall meet at the request of the Heads of State and Government to prepare summit meetings, undertake other missions at the request of the Supreme Council and ensure the implementation of decisions adopted at summit meetings.

The Supreme Council shall meet in regular session once a year or in special session whenever the current President, after consulting the other members, deems it necessary.

4. Relations between the Supreme Council and other subregional, regional and international organizations

In the interest of achieving the above objectives, the Supreme Council shall maintain relations with any organization whose activities may contribute to the strengthening of peace and security in Central Africa.

To that end, the Supreme Council shall maintain close relations with the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

Annex II

Final report of the Subregional Conference on Democratic Institutions and Peace in Central Africa, organized by the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa and held in Bata from 18 to 21 May 1998

Introduction

1. The Conference on Democratic Institutions and Peace in Central Africa was held in Bata, Equatorial Guinea, from 18 to 21 May 1998.

2. The Conference brought together for the first time in a single subregional forum in Central Africa members of government, representatives of opposition parties, senior officers of the armed forces and security forces and representatives of civil society from the countries members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. Many national and international experts also participated in the Conference.

3. Delegations from the following countries took part in the Conference: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and São Tome and Principe. The delegation of Chad had planned to attend but was unable to do so. Rwanda did not take part in the Conference.

4. The solemn opening ceremony included welcoming remarks by His Excellency Mr. Miguel Oyono Ndong Mifumu, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Equatorial Guinea, a statement by His Excellency Mr. Casimir Oye Mba, President of the Bureau and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Gabon, a message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, read out by his representative, Mr. Sammy Buo, Deputy Director of the Africa II Division, and an opening statement by His Excellency Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Organization of the work of the Conference

5. The Conference adopted the following agenda:

- Participatory democracy and the rule of law in Central Africa;
- The role and place of the army in the protection of democratic institutions and in peacekeeping;
- Traditional political cultures and the rule of law;
- The role of society in the processes of peace and democratization in Central Africa;

- The role of the media in the context of democratization in Central Africa;

- Good governance as a factor for promoting economic development and peace in Central Africa.

6. The above agenda items were considered in two working groups:

- Group I: Participatory democracy, the rule of law and the role of the army in the protection of democratic institutions and in peacekeeping in Central Africa;

- Group II: The role of civil society in the democratic process and the preservation of peace, and good governance as a factor for promoting development in Central Africa.

Work of the Conference

7. Working Group I. The agenda items referred to Working Group I were: participatory democracy and the rule of law in Central Africa; the role and place of the army in the protection of democratic institutions and in peacekeeping; and traditional political cultures and the rule of law.

(a) Participatory democracy and the rule of law in Central Africa

Participants took note of a communication by Professor Mwayila Tshiyembe, entitled "La démocratie participative et l'Etat de droit: de l'échec du modèle importé à la redécouverte du modèle négro-africain" ("Participatory democracy and the rule of law: from the failure of the imported model to the rediscovery of the Black African model"). This communication gave rise to a wide-ranging discussion.

In view of the importance of the issues raised, participants recommended that member States should submit their written comments on the document at the Committee's next meeting.

Participants also adopted the proposal for the creation of a subregional parliament, made by His Excellency Mr. Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, in his opening statement.

(b) The role and place of the army in the protection of democratic institutions and in peacekeeping

Aware of the importance of the role and place of the army in the protection of democratic institutions and in peacekeeping in Central Africa, participants recommended that armies that were genuinely national, republican and respectful of human and peoples' rights should be established.

To that end, they called upon States to take urgent action to train their armed forces and security forces in human and peoples' rights, to abolish paramilitary groups, to promote closer cooperation among the armies of the

subregion in order to build mutual confidence, and to establish a better relationship between civil society and the armed forces.

Participants also recommended that all the measures adopted at the most recent Meeting of Ministers of Defence and of the Interior of the Countries Members of the subregion, held at Libreville from 28 to 30 April 1998, should be implemented rapidly.

(c) Traditional political cultures and the rule of law

After considering this item, participants recommended that, in developing participatory systems of government, the member countries should draw extensively on traditional African values, based essentially on solidarity and sharing, in order to avoid stereotypes and mimicry which could lead to contradictions, crises and conflicts. Participants stressed that efforts to promote a cultural identity must lead to progress, peace and solidarity among the peoples of the subregion.

8. Impunity. This question attracted particular attention and participants followed with great interest the presentation made by Ms. Imelda Perry, Deputy Registrar of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

9. Aware of the situation of the Tribunal, participants reiterated the solemn appeal made by the Heads of State and Government of the countries members of the Committee at their summit meeting held in Brazzaville, Congo, on 2 and 3 December 1996 and invited member States to give practical support to the Tribunal, inter alia, by adopting legislative and statutory measures to ensure the exchange of information, the arrest, detention and transfer of suspects and accused persons, the protection of witnesses before and after testifying, and the execution of sentences in accordance with Security Council resolution 955 (1994).

10. Furthermore, aware of the need to combat impunity, participants recommended that civil peace and national harmony should be consolidated in Rwanda and elsewhere in the Central African subregion. To that end, participants recommended the establishment of national reconciliation commissions in those countries, to provide useful assistance to the existing courts.

11. Participants also thanked the Deputy Registrar of the Tribunal for the useful information provided to the Committee on the progress made by the Tribunal in its efforts to combat impunity and promote justice nd security in the subregion. They encouraged her, as a means of implementing the Tribunal's teaching function, to continue her efforts to disseminate public information on the Tribunal's activities to the States of the subregion, their general public and the international community as a whole.

12. At the end of the discussion on the agenda items referred to Working Group I, the representatives of the opposition parties of the Committee's member countries presented a special declaration, which is appended to this report.

13. Working Group II. The agenda items referred to Working Group II were: the role of civil society in the processes of peace and democratization in Central

Africa; the role of the media in the context of democratization in Central Africa; and good governance as a factor for promoting economic development and peace in Central Africa.

(a) The role of civil society in the processes of peace and democratization in Central Africa

Consideration of this item was preceded by a presentation by Professor Babacar Sine, who emphasized the key role played by civil society in the socio-political changes that had occurred in the subregion since the beginning of the democratization process, and the contribution made by civil society to the promotion of peace in Central Africa.

In view of the major contribution of civil society to the processes of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building in the subregion, participants recommended that the member States of the Committee should establish an institutional framework to facilitate the allocation of adequate resources for supporting the activities of organizations of civil society. Participants also recommended involving civil society in the functioning of the early warning mechanism which the member countries of the Committee planned to establish.

Aware that there is always a risk that organizations of civil society may be manipulated, participants recommended that the apolitical nature of civil society should be preserved.

Aware of the key role played by women in the member countries of the Committee, participants recommended that women should participate fully and be involved effectively at all levels of the decision-making process, in order to increase the likelihood of genuine democracy and lasting peace in Central Africa.

In this regard, participants recommended that women should be included in the delegations responsible for peace negotiations, and expressed the hope that more women would participate in future meetings of the Committee.

Participants also recommended that a subregional network of organizations of civil society should be created, in order to enhance the effectiveness of their endeavours to promote peace and democracy in Central Africa.

Convinced that school is an ideal framework for the transmission and dissemination of a culture of peace, participants recommended that instruction in respect for human rights and human dignity should be introduced into school curricula.

(b) The role of the media in the context of democratization in Central Africa

This item was introduced by Mr. Roger Guy Folly, who described the state of the media since the advent of democratic processes in Central Africa.

Aware of the influence of the media on the general public and the role which press organs can play in promoting the values of democracy and peace, participants recommended that the training of journalists and media

professionals should be improved. In this regard, they expressed the hope that an institutional framework to organize the activities of press professionals would be established in all the countries of the subregion and that, in addition to guaranteeing freedom of the press, it would emphasize the responsibilities of media professionals.

Given the situation of the press in Central Africa, where the State has communication capacities, participants recommended that the term "national press" should be replaced by "Government press" to enable all press operators to make better use of existing press structures. That would give organizations of civil society easier access to the national media to publicize their activities, thereby contributing to the information and education functions of the media.

Recalling the many cases in which press organs in the subregion had engaged in acts of propaganda, fomenting hatred and civil unrest, participants recommended that member States should provide better training for media professionals. In that regard, they agreed to organize a subregional training seminar under the auspices of the Committee to better familiarize journalists with the code of ethics of their profession and increase their professionalism.

Participants also recommended that a subregional training centre for journalists should be established and that exchanges among the press organs of member countries of the Committee should be promoted.

Furthermore, participants condemned the attitude of certain international media, which used their ability to reach a global audience to disseminate incorrect information about countries of the subregion.

(c) Good governance as a factor for promoting economic development and peace in Central Africa

This item was introduced by Professor Babacar Sine, who emphasized that there were two sides to the concept of good governance: enhancing the State's effectiveness in managing public affairs, and restructuring the State to disengage it from all sectors of economic activity.

While firmly supporting any effort to achieve more rational and more transparent management of the State, for instance, through the increased participation of civil society, participants questioned the need for total disengagement of the State, particularly from social sectors such as education and health.

Furthermore, given the linkage between poor management of public affairs and the worsening poverty which was one of the underlying causes of the increasing number of conflicts in Central Africa, participants recommended that Governments of the subregion should promote policies permitting the more rational use of national resources and the modernization of the State.

Delegations applauded the Committee's decision to organize the Conference, which had made it possible to involve civil society in the discussions held at Bata.

Solemn closing ceremony

14. The solemn closing ceremony included the adoption of the final report and of the Bata Declaration for the Promotion of Lasting Democracy, Peace and Development in Central Africa (see appendix I), an address by Mr. Sammy Kum Buo, representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Secretary of the Committee, a statement by His Excellency Mr. Casimir Oye Mba, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Gabon, and a closing statement by His Excellency Mr. Angel Serafin Seriche Dougan, Prime Minister and Head of Government of Equatorial Guinea.

Done at Bata on 21 March 1998

Appendix I

Bata Declaration for the Promotion of Lasting Democracy, Peace and Development in Central Africa, adopted by the Subregional Conference on Democratic Institutions and Peace in Central Africa

1. Participants in the Subregional Conference on Democratic Institutions and Peace in Central Africa, bringing together members of government, representatives of opposition parties, senior officers of the armed forces and security forces, parliamentarians and representatives of civil society from the Central African countries, met in Bata, Equatorial Guinea, from 18 to 21 May 1998, under the auspices of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, to consider issues related to the democratic process and peace in Central Africa.

2. Participants expressed their deep concern at the persistence of crises and conflicts in Central Africa, which had caused such loss of life, destruction and suffering in the subregion. They saw that precarious situation as a threat to the democratic process and to development in what was potentially a rich subregion.

3. They emphasized the historic opportunity offered by the Conference, which was being held during a period of major changes in Africa, characterized by the still difficult transition from an era of single political parties to one of pluralist democracy.

4. Participants noted that the Conference had made it possible for different social and political sectors to work together in the search for ways and means of strengthening peace and democracy within States and throughout the Central African subregion. In that regard, they warmly thanked the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his firm support and for the material assistance which the Organization had provided to the Committee to permit the holding of that important Conference. Participants expressed the hope that more such meetings would be held.

5. They also thanked the Secretary-General for providing constant support and encouragement to the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, a key political mechanism for building confidence and enhancing cooperation for peace and stability in a turbulent subregion.

6. Participants recognized unanimously that, as the Secretary-General of the United Nations had stressed in his report to the General Assembly and the Security Council on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, democratic government helped to guarantee political rights, protect economic freedoms and foster an environment where peace and development could flourish.

7. Accordingly, and convinced of the need to establish in their subregion open political systems which permitted the full participation of all social and political forces, they reiterated their firm commitment to promoting democracy

in their own States and to contributing to the stability of the Central African subregion as a whole.

8. They reaffirmed the sovereign right of each State to establish a political, social and economic system appropriate to its own culture and to determine the rate at which its institutions would be democratized, while respecting universal principles, particularly those set forth in regional and international instruments such as the Charter of the United Nations, the Charter of the Organization of African Unity, the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

9. They recognized that the establishment of solid democratic foundations in each member State, and in the subregion as a whole, would help to increase stability, strengthen the bases for conflict prevention and promote sustainable socio-economic development in Central Africa.

10. They emphasized that, despite all the pitfalls, it was necessary to persevere on the road to democratization, which was not an isolated event but a continuing process, in order to create the ideal conditions for the prosperity of the States and peoples of the entire subregion.

11. While reaffirming the sovereign right of each nation to determine the nature and rate of democratization of its institutions, they recognized unanimously that that process must inevitably lead to the development of a dynamic political system capable of allowing the full expression of the people's will and based on the following principles:

- respect for the rule of law;
- efforts to combat impunity;
- political pluralism;
- the organization of free, transparent and honest elections;
- freedom of the press;
- independence of the judiciary;
- respect for human rights and human dignity;
- promotion of a genuine, essentially non-violent democratic culture; and
- the practice of dialogue and tolerance.

Recommendations

12. In order to provide a sustainable basis for the democratization process and to strengthen peace in the Central African subregion, participants adopted the following measures and recommended the creation of the following mechanisms at the inter-State and internal levels:

At the inter-State level

(a) In response to a proposal by His Excellency Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, Head of State of Equatorial Guinea, the Conference recommended that a subregional parliament should be established in Central Africa as soon as possible. That parliament, which would be responsible for dealing with issues of common interest designed to strengthen confidence-building measures and peace in the subregion, would be composed of parliamentarians elected in pluralist, democratic elections in their respective countries and appointed by their national parliaments. The subregional parliament would serve as a key mechanism for cooperation and for the promotion of democratic values and the democratic experiment in Central Africa and would meet in the member countries on a rotating basis.

(b) Convinced that the democratization process involved not only politicians but also peoples, and in order to give the subregional parliament all the support that it deserved, participants recommended that representatives of civil society, particularly organizations for the protection and promotion of human rights, organizations for enhancing the status of women and youth movements, should be given permanent observer status in the parliament.

(c) Participants instructed the Government of Equatorial Guinea, in consultation with the current President of the Bureau of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, to notify the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the international community as a whole in order to facilitate the early establishment of the subregional parliament.

(d) Participants reiterated that it was urgently necessary for all States of the Central African subregion to sign and scrupulously observe the Non-Aggression Pact jointly negotiated, adopted and signed by them in order to avoid resorting to the use of force in their reciprocal relations. They again called upon Angola and Rwanda to sign the Pact and invited signatory States to ratify it.

(e) Aware of the vital importance of establishing and ensuring the effectiveness of democratic institutions in the subregion, participants appealed to the international community to help train competent national personnel, particularly in the areas of election organization and the proper functioning of democratic institutions.

(f) In order to give the peoples of the subregion a better understanding of the ideals of peace and a democratic culture in Central Africa, the Conference requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to facilitate the publication and wide dissemination of the results of the historic Bata Conference.

At the internal level

(a) Stressing the need for scrupulous respect for the rule of law, participants unequivocally condemned the use of armed force as a means of winning and retaining political power.

(b) Participants recalled that the role of the armed forces was to guarantee republican institutions, due respect for the law and the stability of the State governed by the rule of law.

(c) Convinced that good governance and transparent management of public affairs would promote public well-being and improved economic performance in the subregion as a whole, participants stressed the need to combat corruption and impunity.

(d) Participants reaffirmed that respect for the civil and political rights of individuals, human rights and the rule of law as a guarantor of equity and social justice was the best safeguard against threats to the peace and internal security of States and to the strengthening of democracy.

13. Participants recommended that there should be more frequent contacts between politicians and civil society both within and among the various member countries of the Committee, in order to build public confidence in State institutions and to make elected officials accountable once more to the State and the general public.

Done at Bata on 21 May 1998

Appendix II

Special declaration by members of the opposition of countries of the Central African subregion, on the occasion of the Subregional Conference on Democratic Institutions and Peace in Central Africa

Noting the desire of the United Nations and the Heads of member States to invite representatives of the opposition of countries of the subregion to take part in the Conference on Democratic Institutions and Peace in Central Africa, the representatives of the opposition here present welcome this excellent initiative, which makes it possible for all political sectors to reflect together on the problems which are undermining the democratic process and peace in the subregion.

By taking this approach, the international community and the Heads of member States of the subregion have recognized the importance of the opposition as a potential contributor to conflict resolution in Central Africa. Accordingly, the representatives of the opposition hope that such meetings open to political sectors and civil society will take place regularly. However, the members of the opposition of member States deeply regret the absence of their counterparts from some of the delegations present at Bata.

Since poverty and the poor organization of elections are the underlying causes of the conflicts which have ravaged the subregion, the representatives of the opposition would like to see:

1. The establishment of consensus-based national electoral commissions;

2. The adoption of courageous economic and social measures and, above all, good governance by those in government, in order to eradicate misery and social injustice.

Since it is the opposition's role to bear witness and to counterbalance the actions of those in government, which is a way of participating in the life of their States, the representatives of the opposition would like to see the introduction, in their respective States, of an opposition charter establishing the rights and duties of members of the opposition.

In conclusion, the representatives of the opposition support the proposal by President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea for the establishment of a subregional parliament in Central Africa. However, they believe that the creation of such an important institution should be preceded by the establishment of contact groups among the various parliaments and by the creation of an association of Central African parliaments.

Done at Bata on 21 May 1998

Signatories

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